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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000020

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SUBJECT: THE CONGOLESE NATIONAL POLICE: UNPAID AND POORLY PAID, BUT SIGNS THAT CHANGE MAY COME

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The PNC is a ragtag police force whose members receive an average monthly salary of \$16. But the winds of change may be blowing. According to its executive secretary, the PNC has developed a 15-year modernization plan and is working with international donors to implement it, including as a first step the completion of a census of PNC members. Based on the results of the census, police staffing levels will be adjusted to meet the nation's needs. Also anticipated are salary increases and training for recruits. Even with assistance from the international community, making the PNC a real police force will be a lengthy and arduous process. End comment.

How the PNC is organized

¶2. (U) The Congolese National Police (Police Nationale Congolaise -- PNC) is the national police force of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The PNC was created on April 22, 1997, after Laurent Kabila assumed power. The organization consists of six departments: the Guard Brigade (Brigade de Garde - protection of embassies, government offices, and ministries); Criminal Police; the Directorate of Safety and General Information (Direction des Renseignements Generaux et Securite -- police investigation, drug enforcement, and intelligence); Traffic Police; Quick Reaction Police (riot control); and Provincial Inspections (manages all police duties). The PNC is currently under the leadership of General John Numbi. It is estimated that the national police force has approximately 150,000 officers. Since its inception, the PNC has been understaffed, underpaid, lacked training, and accused of committing human rights violations. However, the DRC government (GDRC) is collaborating with the European Union to institute necessary organizational reforms, so the PNC can become a modern and professional security force.

¶3. (SBU) Low wages, which are not paid regularly, are one of the root causes of the systematic corruption that exists throughout the ranks of the PNC. The average monthly salary of a police officer is 16 USD. Police officers are compelled to harass and "shake down" the local population for bribes in order to supplement their meager salaries. This causes the PNC to lose its credibility in the eyes of the local citizenry. Furthermore, the GDRC's lack of a reliable salary payment system enables senior echelons of the PNC to embezzle officers' salaries. Paying PNC officers a living wage and ensuring that this money ends up in their hands will go a long way in professionalizing the organization.

Lack of training and education

¶4. (SBU) Lack of training and education for police officers are also serious obstacles in the modernization of the PNC. It is estimated that only 25 percent of the police force are graduates of local universities. Many officers cannot read or speak French, and can only communicate in Lingala, an African language widely spoken in the western DRC. Also, the PNC does not have an institution or program to train its cadets. Untrained recruits have to purchase their uniforms before being given their assignments. Police officers are often seen with corroding weapons or simply empty holsters and handcuff holders. Senior officers are unconcerned with the welfare and training of their subordinates, but are more interested in the fringe benefits of their status.

¶5. (SBU) The shortcomings of the PNC can be corrected, but it will take Congolese leadership, time, patience, and funding. The GDRC has shown signs of commitment to effect changes to its national police force. General Michel Elesse Yombentole, a former member of the Congolese military and the PNC's Executive Secretary, informed RSO that GDRC has already begun the initial phase of its 15-year

KINSHASA 00000020 002 OF 002

plan to transform the organization. Due to the fact that the GDRC does not have an accurate count of its police officers (the number fluctuates between 100,000 and 250,000), the first step is to conduct a nationwide census. This will be a long and tedious exercise. The GDRC then plans to increase the size of the police force in order to adequately police Africa's third largest country (more than 900,000 square miles or roughly equivalent to the U.S. east of the Mississippi River).

Plans for higher wages and more training

¶6. (SBU) The PNC also hopes that higher wages will attract better educated recruits and deter officers from engaging in criminal activities. The Government plans to institute a formal training program and upgrade the police equipment inventory. (Note: The Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs is in the second year of a police training program to develop a border control directorate, and in CY 2010 will begin a SGBV-sensitization training program for police officers. End note.)

¶7. (SBU) Comment: An effective police force is essential to the revitalization of the DRC. Professionalization, if achieved, would have a trickle-down effect on society at large. It is therefore encouraging to see the GDRC's interest in professionalizing and modernizing its police force. This is particularly true since the PNC has been implicated in numerous human rights violations. Although many in the Government talk about modernizing the PNC, the GDRC has historically placed a higher priority on its military rather than its police force, as demonstrated by the fact that the PNC's two most senior officers (Numbi and Yombentole) are former FARDC generals. Even with assistance from the international community, making the PNC a real police force will be a lengthy and arduous process. End comment.

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